

LETTER FROM YUGOSLAVIA / Saša Rakezic, Pančevo, Yugoslavia

Civil war in Yugoslavia has caused not only suffering of millions of people, but its result was also a disconnection of information exchange and even postal links among inhabitants of it's former republics. Before the crisis escalated, small press enthusiasts from different parts of ex-Yugoslavia were not only communicating among each other, but they felt as a part of (more or less) the same scene. Today it's hard to get much information on what's happening in separate republics, not to mention the fact that traumatic economic situations killed nearly all traces of ex-Yugoslav small press.

Before we continue with a brief history of underground press in this part of the Balkan Peninsula, I should point out the ex-Yugoslav comic scene was never close to the (American) "underground comix" type of thing. European influences were much stronger (especially French/Belgian school), which generally means much "softer" and "fantasy"-oriented material. This is only one of the reasons why there was not much space for comics in Yugoslav small press, and why comic zines were particularly rare.

Anyway, although self-published publications from this corner of the world were mostly verbally-oriented, at their best they represented interesting combinations of Western and East European counterculture.

Basically, small press production in ex-Yugoslavia started with the "New Wave" movement at the end of the 70s and the first few years of the 80s. The great expansion of local rock scenes, especially in Belgrade and Novi Sad (Serbia), Zagreb and Rijeka (Croatia) and in Slovenia (with internationally recognized band/project Laibach) was a reflection of new cultural emancipation in years after President Tito's death. It was a right time for many zines and short-lived magazines, and I was the publisher of one of the earliest publications of that kind-- named "KRETEN" (CRETIN).

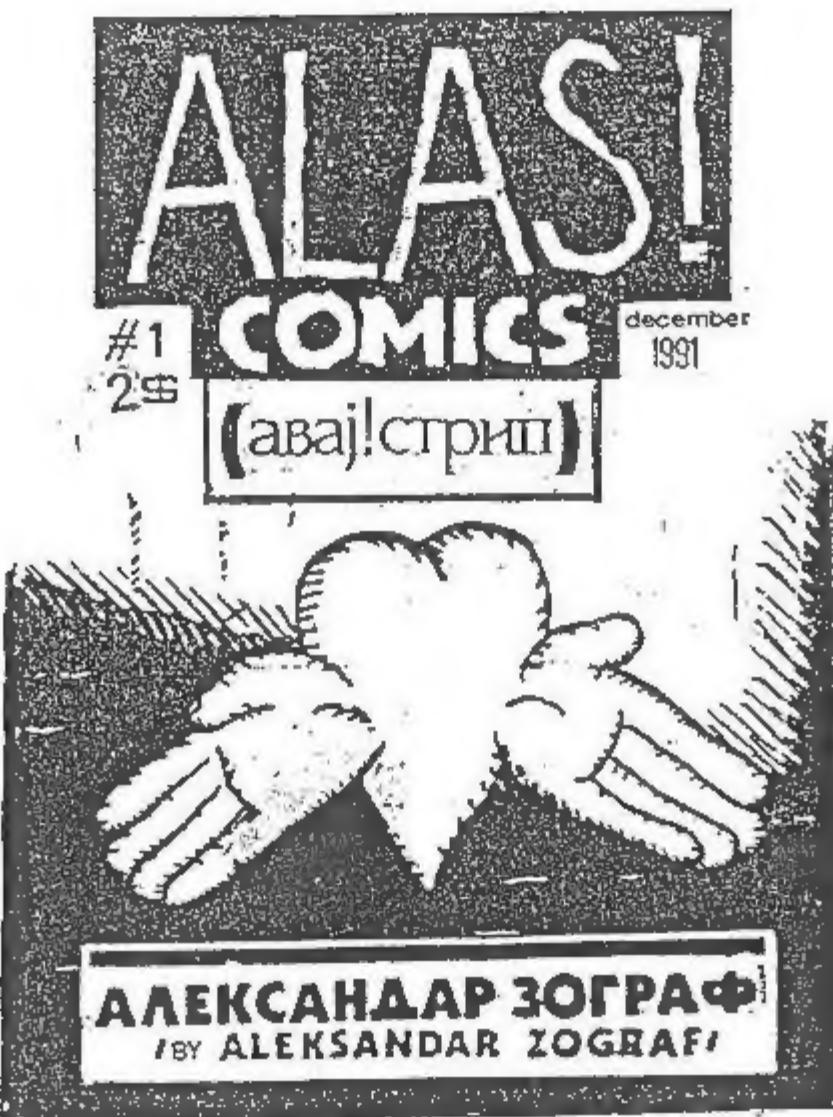
Technical quality of the first wave of Yugoslav small press was very poor because it was hard to find even a decent Xerox machine around. But the whole movement was part of the new-born enthusiasm and it certainly came out of honest intentions. Soon the number of underground publications increased, and although music zines were still dominant, there was a space for a large variety of subjects to cover.

Another opportunity for development and branching of Yugoslav small press came with the growing hardcore-punk scene during the mid-80s. Young people were encouraged to print their own zines, and to contact people from abroad. Bad thing about those fanzines was that they mostly followed the formula of the similar publications from the West, without much invention, but the good point was in their ability to communicate both inland and abroad.

One of the best small press magazines from the second part of the 80s was "PLES SLOMLJENOG DUPETA NA VETRU" (DANCE OF THE BROKEN ARSE ON THE WIND), from Subotica (Serbia). They published a lot of different material-- from comics to short stories, poetry, music and movie reviews, even essays, and with contributors from all parts of the country.

Beginning of the 90s was the time of new hope-- before war spread up, ex-Yugoslavia was going through a short-lived economic stabilization. It was a chance for new ideas to show up and develop, but-- political opportunists took weapons in their hands, and things went bad--

Reprinted from: CITY LIMITS GAZETTE # Harry & Lena ride the Jell-O jitney (Sept. 1993)



DURING  
THE DAYS  
of a  
civil war  
in  
yugoslavia



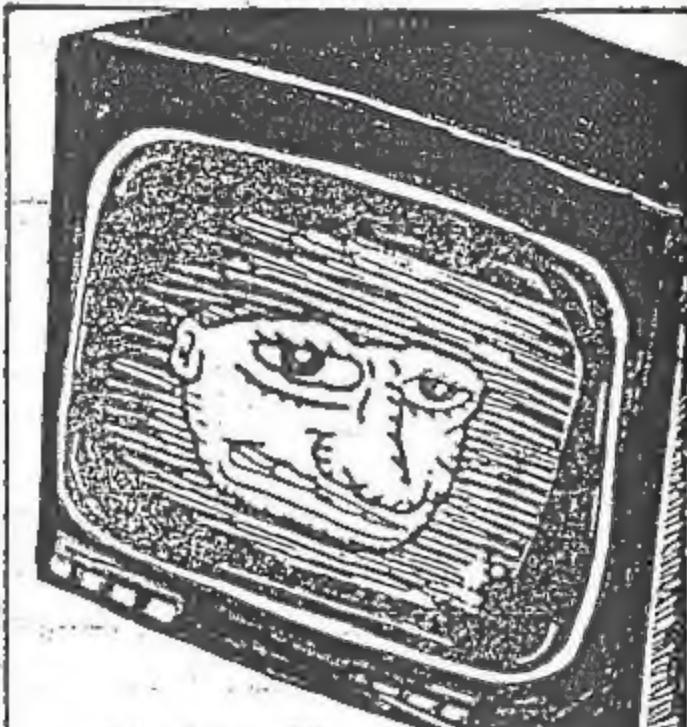
FACES OF PASSERS-BY LOOK SERIOUS,  
AS IF THEY KNOW SOME HORRIBLE TRUTH.



EARTHQUAKES WERE FREQUENT, YET NO  
ONE PANICKED. THEY HAD OTHER WORRIES  
ON THEIR MINDS.



BACK ON THE FRONT, DOZENS OF MILITARY  
AND PARAMILITARY FORMATIONS FIGHT EACH  
OTHER. THEIR UNIFORMS ARE QUITE SIMI-  
LAR AND SOMETIMES THEY DIDN'T KNOW  
WHO THEY WERE SHOOTING AT.



PSYCHICS WERE PROPHESYING THE  
COURSE OF THE WAR ON T.V., RADIO,  
AND IN NEWSPAPERS.



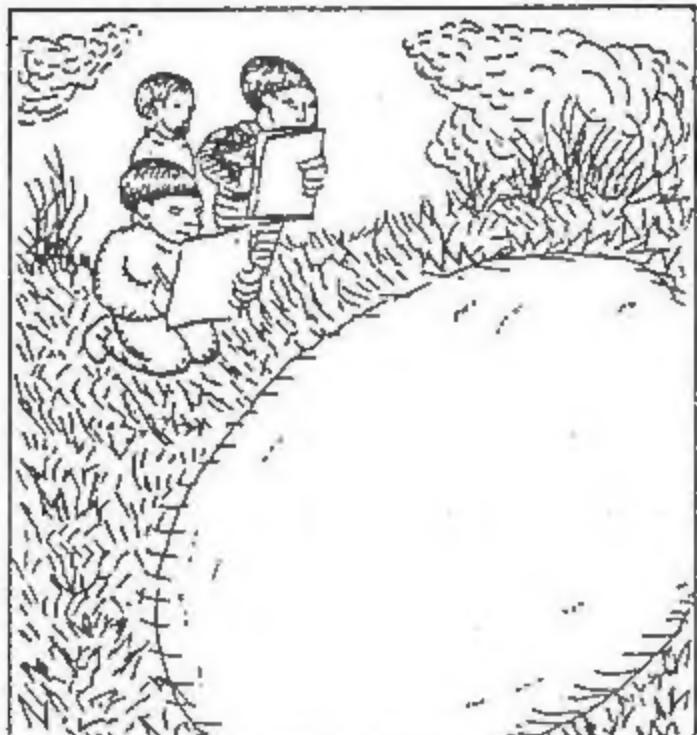
EVERYONE PREFERENCES TO STAY AT HOME,  
HIDING IN THEIR OWN SHELLS. BUT  
THE PHONE CALLS ARE EXTENSIVE.



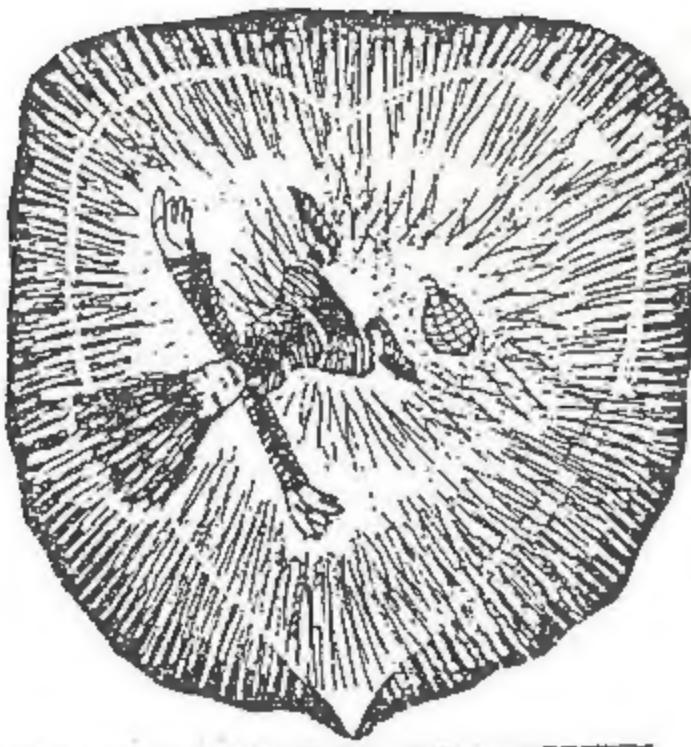
A FRIEND OF MINE IN A PUNK BAND DROVE  
A MILITARY AMBULANCE. HE SPOKE OF THE  
DEAD SOLDIERS THEY FOUND IN A MILITARY  
VEHICLE. ONE OF THEM HAD HIS HEAD  
CRUSHED, HIS FACE WAS SLIPPING OFF HIS  
SKULL. THE OTHER WAS HEADLESS. THEY  
FOUND THE BODY, BUT COULDN'T FIND THE  
HEAD.



AN OLD GYPSY WAS SELLING RAGS AND  
SECONDHAND BOOKS AT THE FLEA MARKET.  
HE SHOUTED, "TAKE ALL THIS FOR FREE!  
WE ARE SURROUNDED BY MADNESS ANYWAY!"



IN BOSNIA, THEY SAW UFO'S. CHILDREN  
WERE DRAWING SKETCHES BASED ON ROUND  
TRACKS IN THE GRASS.



THERE WERE SOME CASES OF DISAPPOINTED LOVERS WHO CAME BACK FROM THE FRONT AND THREW A BOMB AT THEIR UNFAITHFUL ONES.



IN THE INTRODUCTION TO THE CROATIAN "TOM AND JERRY" COMIC BOOK, THE EDITOR ASKED CROATIAN CHILDREN NOT TO BUY WALT DISNEY COMICS BECAUSE THEY ARE PUBLISHED IN SERBIA.



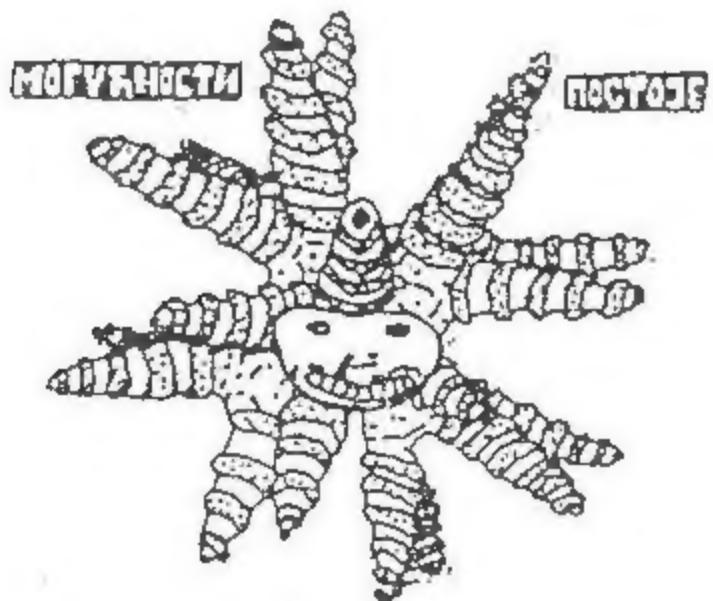
WE TRIED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAD HAPPENED. THERE WAS A WHOLE SPECTRUM OF EVENTS. THEN WE LISTEN TO THOSE SMART ALECKS FROM THE WEST, WHO THINK THEY COME FROM A SUPERIOR CIVILIZATION.



AS I WALK DOWN THE STREET, I CAN FEEL THAT THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE AIR, SOME KIND OF PRESSURE, OR AN EVIL SPIRIT.



WE ALREADY REALIZED THAT HISTORY  
BOOKS ARE FICTION. SO-CALLED  
"HISTORICAL EVENTS" ARE COMPLICATED  
MIXTURES OF MASS TRUTHS AND  
PERSONAL REVELATIONS.



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FRONT COVER: DRAWING BASED ON DREAM  
I HAD ON OCTOBER 27<sup>TH</sup>, 1991.

OO  
ORDER "ALAS!COMICS" # 2 BY  
SENDING 2 \$ CASH TO:

Saša Rakezic  
c/o Gordana Basta  
Milovane Glisica 11  
26000 Pančevo  
YUGOSLAVIA.



CARTOON WITNESS / Robin Coder-Willis, PO Box 390, McCleary, WA 98557-0390

This is the first entry from a call for narratives from spouses, girl/boyfriends, and other significant others of cartoonists. The following is from Gordana Basta, girlfriend of Saša Rakezić of Pančeva, Yugoslavia:

Saša usually acts very ungainly, and it often gets on my nerves to watch the way he crosses the street, or ties his shoes. Sometimes while he rides his bike something suddenly happens in his head, and his mind goes somewhere else-- just as if he does not see what's happening around him for awhile.

Above all, everybody notices the strange way he drinks water. It's hard to describe, but he does it differently than the rest of the people.

But he is also very friendly, and it's to him that I should be thankful for meeting so many interesting people, and visiting so many places. Saša tolerates me when I become mad, and after all he is an interesting and witty guy. He has made me interested in so many things in which he is obsessed, like stones, shells and fossils. I even dreamt two pages of comics (which he later reconstructed following my description)-- I was evidently inspired by his experiments on dream-rooted comics and cartoons, or maybe dreaming comics is contagious?

I'm glad that we worked together on some of the scripts for his comics. Also, we managed to carry on during the hard times in our country, and I helped him hide from the draft.

In fact, it is easy to live with Saša, although he is a man from a different planet. Since the local transport in our town is practically out of work, and we can't ride our bikes during the upcoming Winter, we will have so much time for talking and enjoying each other's company during the long walks.

Reprinted from: WHITE BUFFALO GAZETTE # Rush  
Lintbrain swings the election (Nov. 1994)

# ALAS! COMICS

(авантюри)

1992  
#2  
—  
28

DREAM-OF-WAR ISSUE

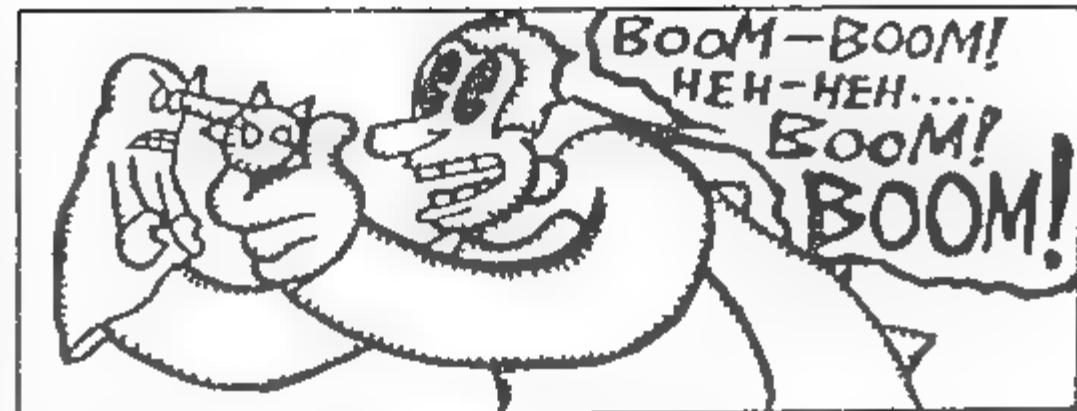


## "LEFT-RIGHT" by ALEXANDAR ZOGRAY



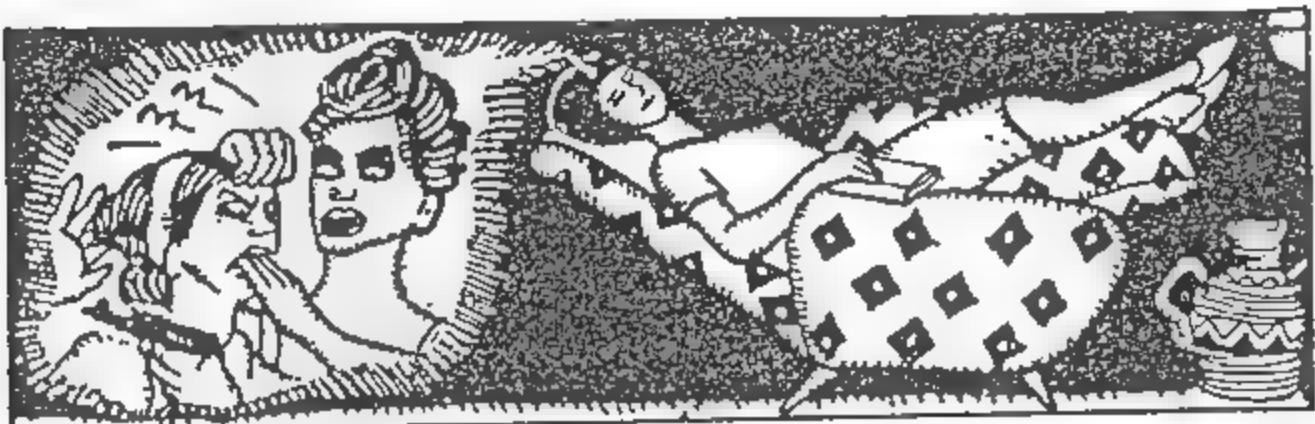
BOOM BOOM  
BOOM BOOM

BY JAKEN 2004 HOBSON



# THREE DREAMS

BY  
ALEKSANDAR  
ZOGRAF



Before any war started, there was a DREAM OF WAR.  
In this issue, we are dreaming our own daylight  
experience.

"Martians Are Among Us" ( reproduced in "Blue Ryder" No. 20 ) was created in times when Yugoslavia was safest place to live.

"Left-Right" was originally published in Belgrade's periodical "Књижевна реч" (Word of Literature) →

No. 397. Character named The Phantom of War introduced himself on ouija board.

I am glad that "Alas! Comics" No. 1 was reprinted in Canadian collection "Comix Compendium", German zine "Wimmersuse" and Chicago's monthly "Bonus!" (they print 20.000 copies!).

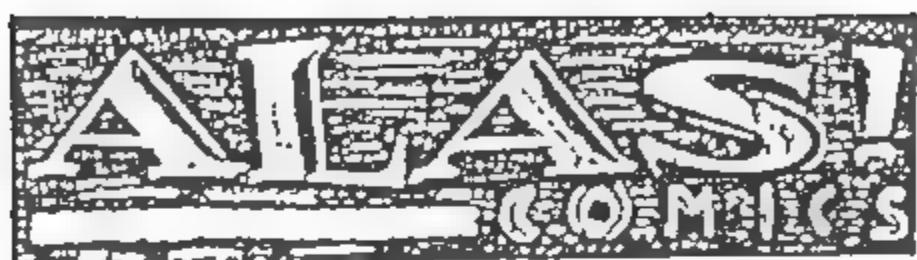
Many thanks to Reverend Speaker Gerald A. Polley, who printed up some quantity of our first issue, and distributed it in U.S. →

If you want "Alas! Comics" No.1., send 2,\$-( CASH only ) - it hopefully covers the price of postage, and packing.



Saša Rakezić  
c/o Gordana Basta  
Milovana Glišića 11  
26000 Pančevo  
YUGOSLAVIA





#3 • 2\$

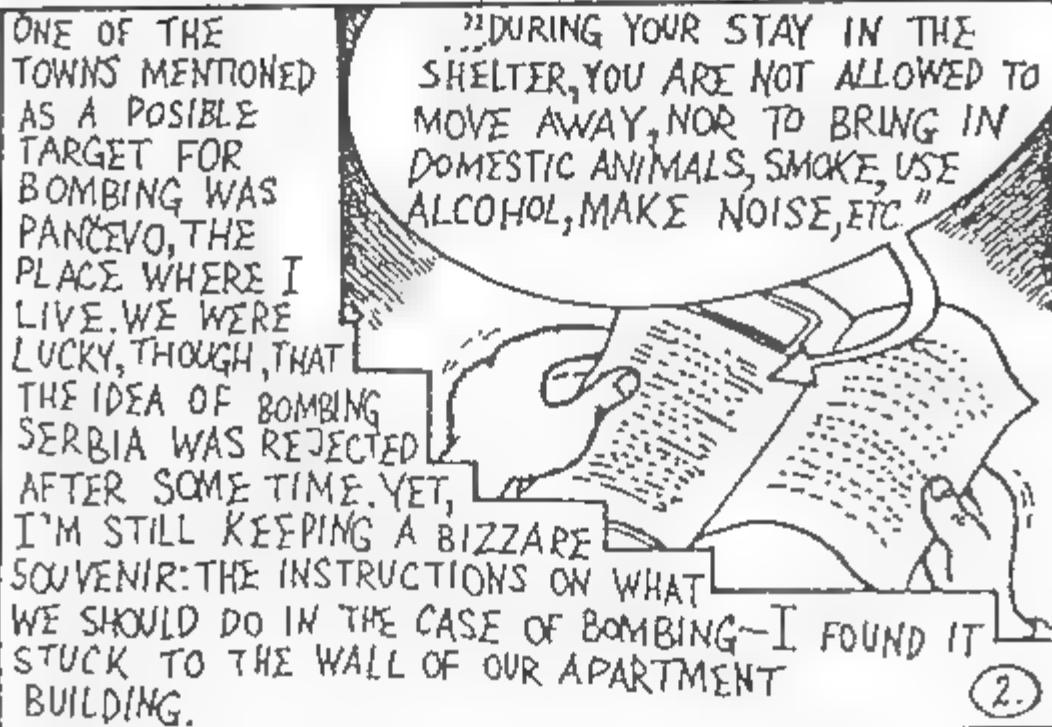


# WEIRD HALF-DREAM EXPERIENCE

By ALEKSANDAR ZOGRAF

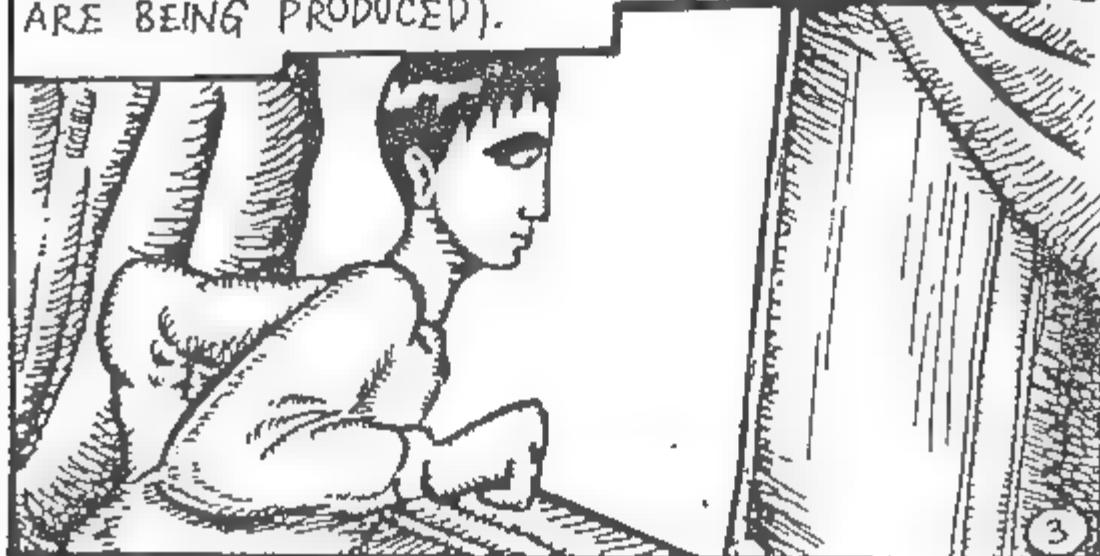


1.



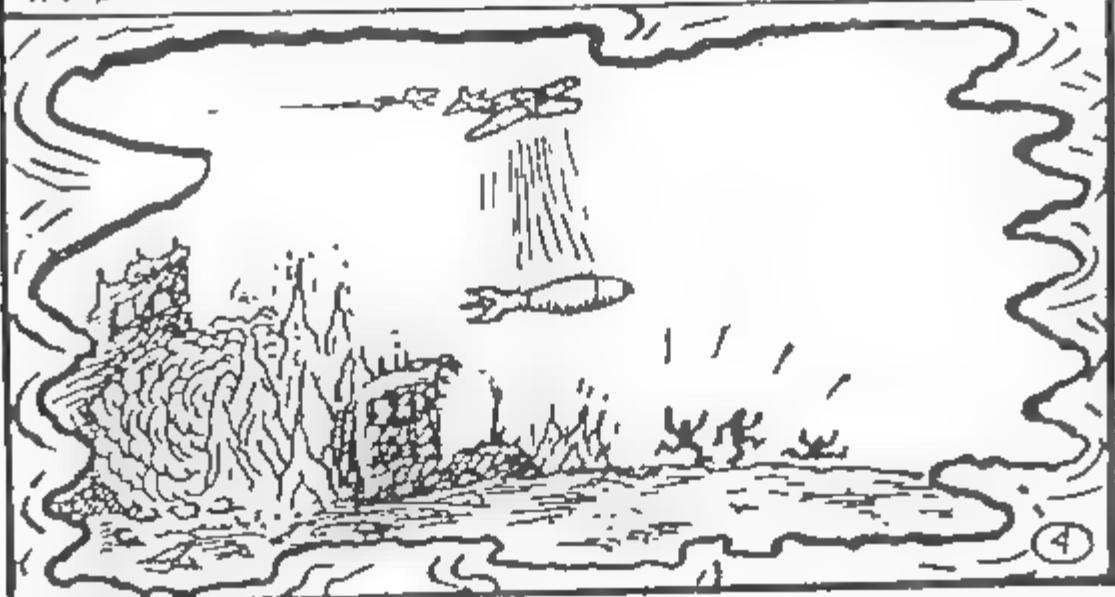
2.

FUNNILY ENOUGH, MY FLAT IS PRETTY CLOSE TO THE AREA WHERE BOMBS COULD FALL. FROM MY WINDOW, I CAN SEE THE PANČEVO INDUSTRIAL ZONE (WHERE SOME COMPONENTS FOR THE MILITARY WEAPONRY ARE BEING PRODUCED).



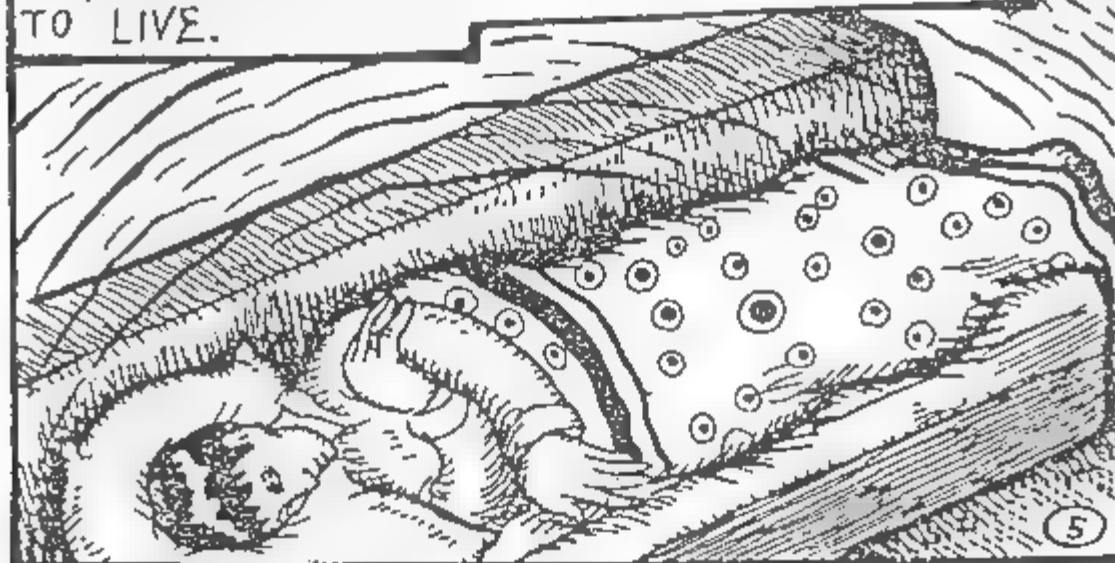
3.

MAYBE NATO BOMBERS WOULD ACT VERY PRECISELY, SO THAT THE NEARBY CIVILIAN BUILDINGS AND HOUSES WOULD NOT BE HARMED. BUT HOW CAN YOU TELL?



(4)

STRANGEST OF ALL, I EXPERIENCED A WEIRD HALF-DREAM HALLUCINATION SOME 3 OR 4 YEARS BEFORE THE WAR EVEN STARTED, DURING THE TIMES WHEN YUGOSLAVIA WAS REALLY A SAFE AND QUIET PLACE TO LIVE.



(5)

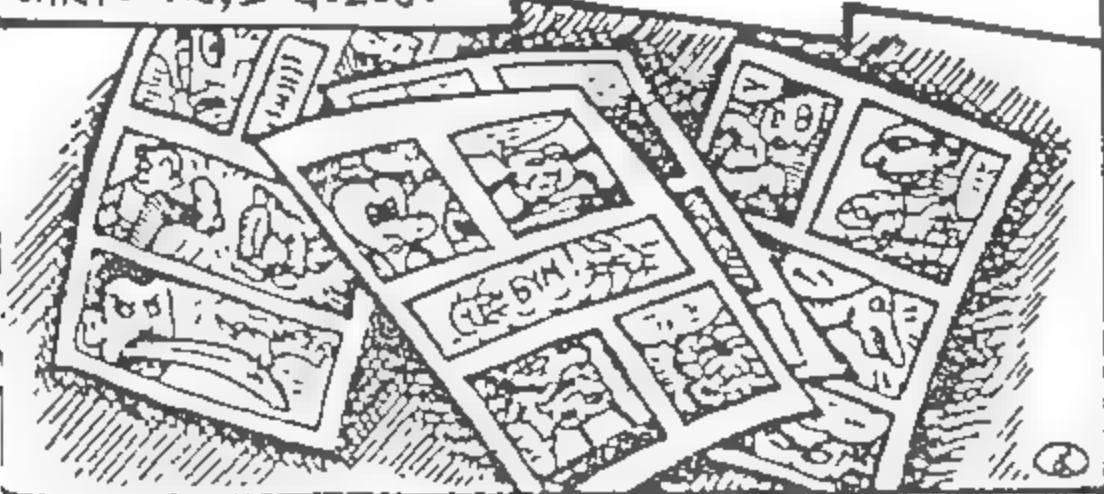
WHILE I WAS WAKING FROM MY SLEEP, I WAS OVERWHELMED BY A SENSATION THAT A BOMB FELT JUST IN FRONT OF OUR BLOCK OF FLATS. I DIDN'T ASK MYSELF HOW IT WAS POSSIBLE, I JUST WANTED SOME SHELTER



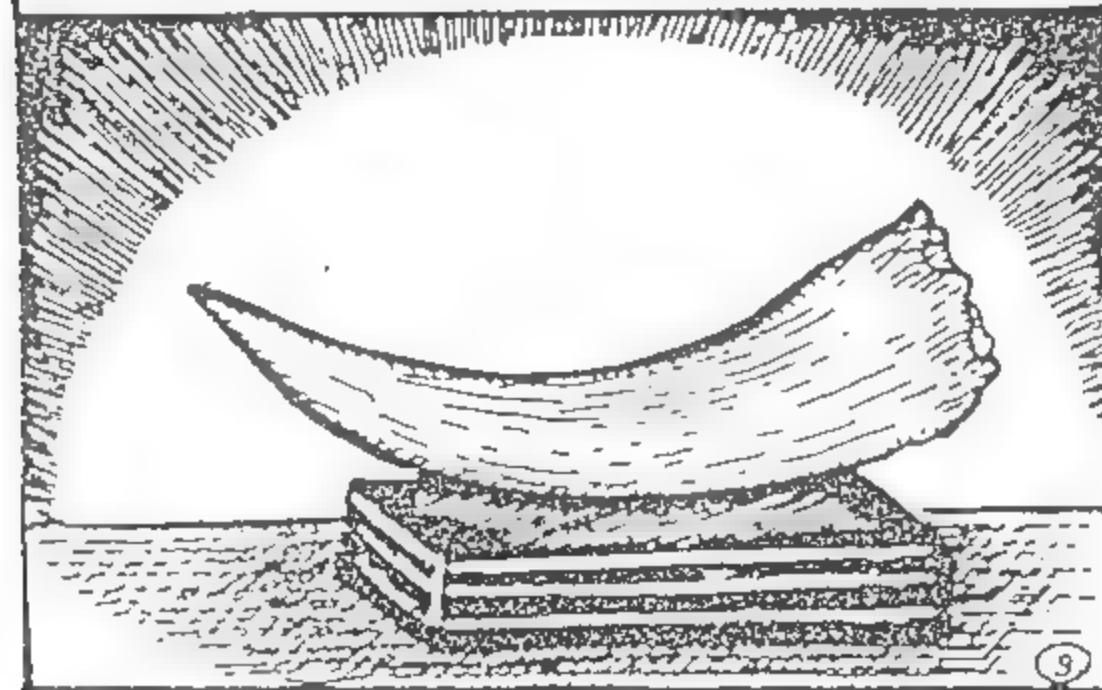
THEN I LOOKED OUTSIDE MY WINDOW, AND REALIZED THAT EVERYTHING WAS NORMAL. THIS INCREASED MY CONFUSION EVEN FURTHER. FOR A MOMENT, MY HALF-DREAM EXPERIENCE SEEMED EVEN MORE REAL THAN REALITY ITSELF.



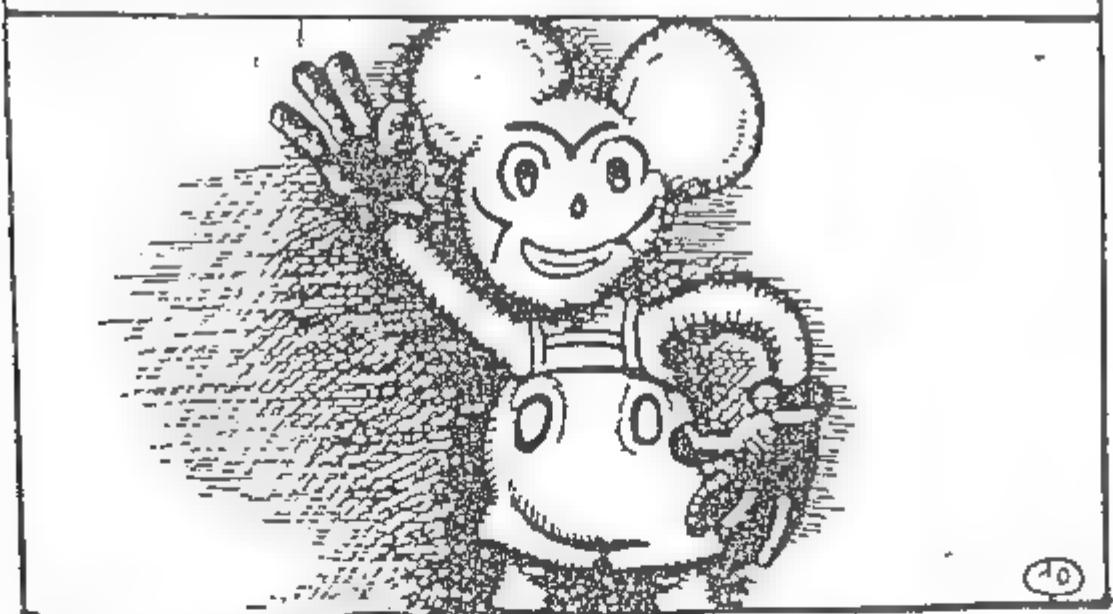
THANK GOD THAT BOMBING OF MY HOMETOWN DIDN'T OCCUR IN OUR ACTUAL REALITY. STILL, I WAS WONDERING WHAT WILL BE LOST IF BOMBS DESTROYED MY FLAT? JUST A BUNCH OF SILLY CARTOONS, I GUESS...



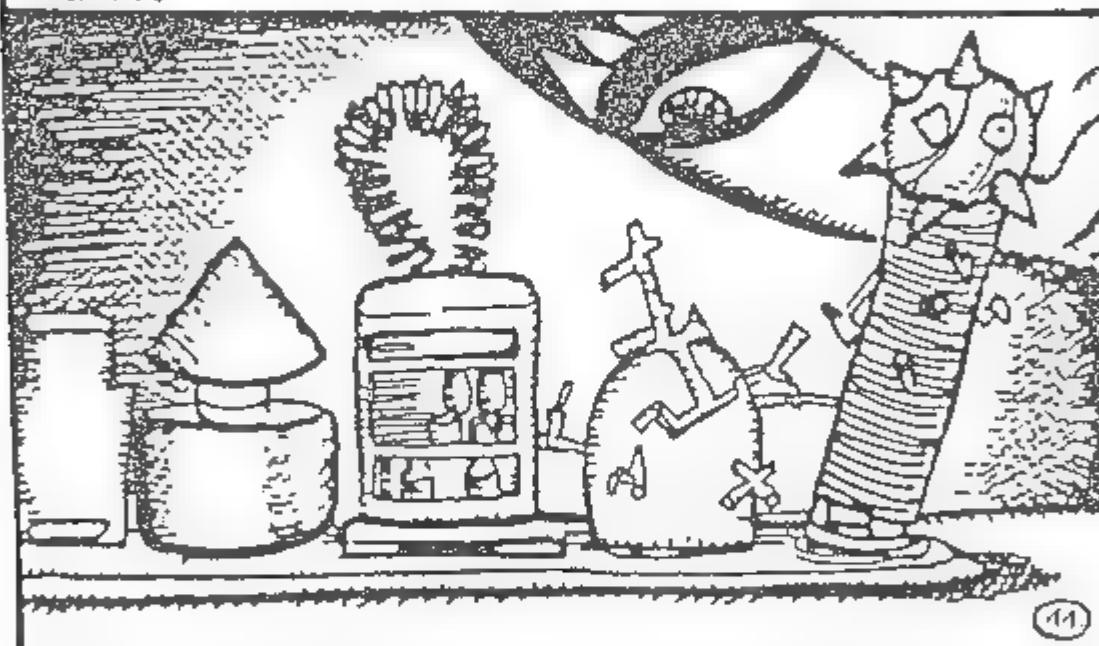
... A GIANT HORN OF A PREHISTORIC BUFFALO...



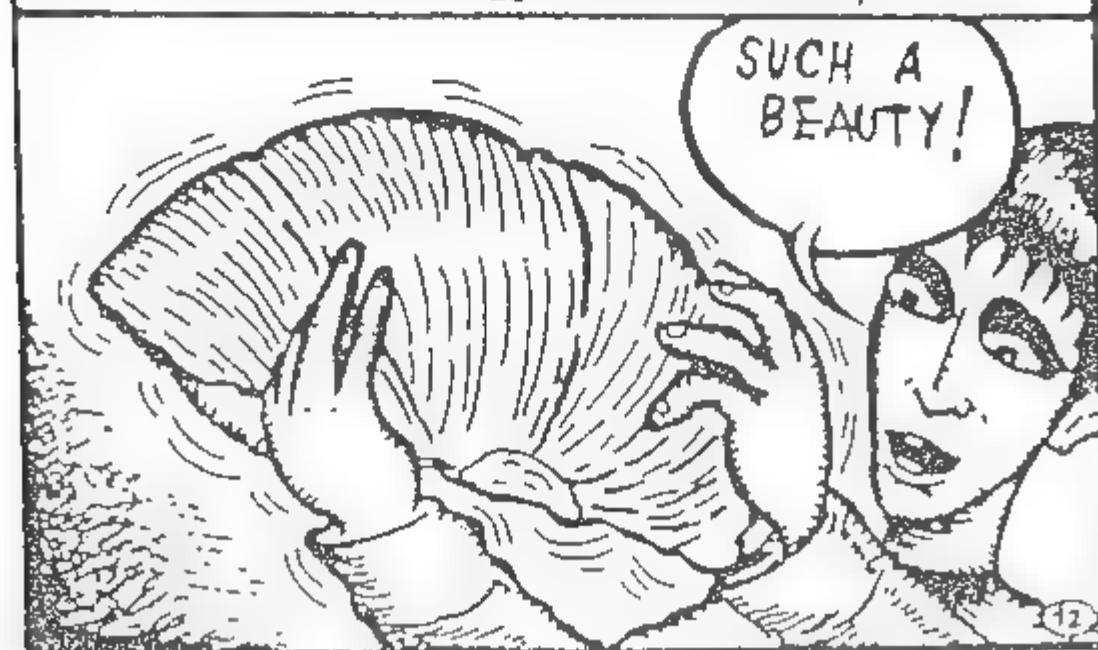
...A RUSSIAN MICKEY MOUSE MADE OF  
GREEN PLASTIC...



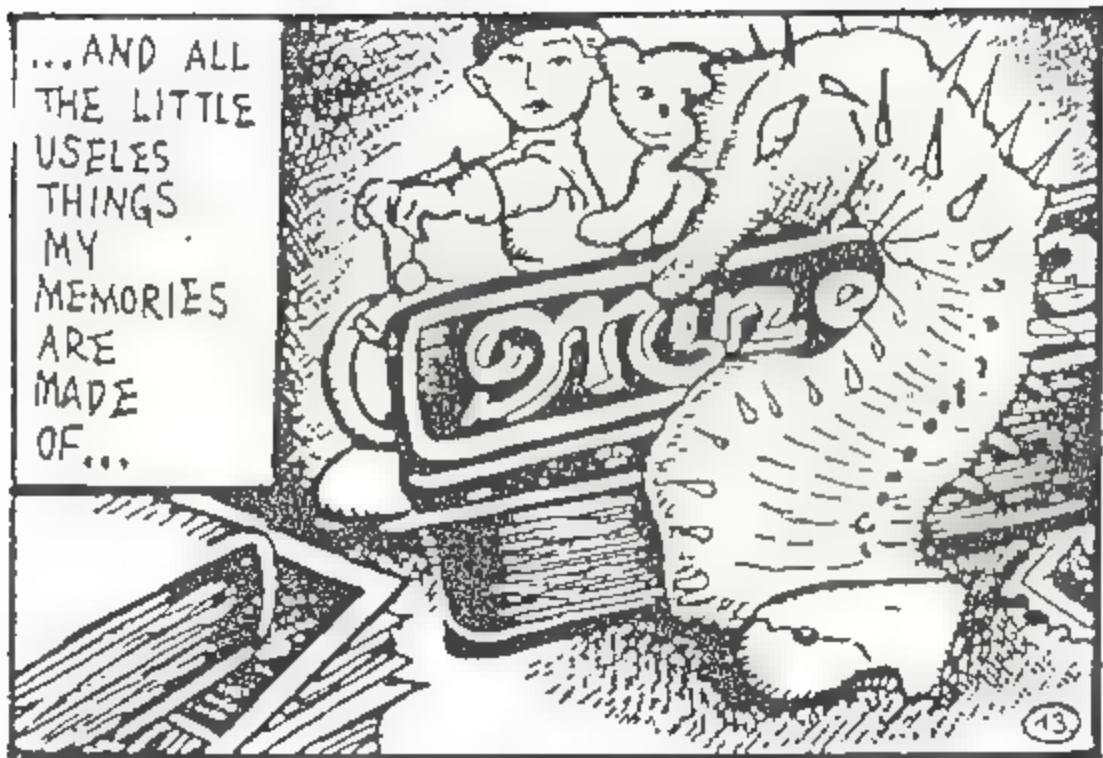
...MINIATURE SCULPTURES I CREATED SOME TIME  
AGO...



SOME OF THE FOSSILES I EXCAVATED, TOO!



...AND ALL  
THE LITTLE  
USELESS  
THINGS.  
MY  
MEMORIES  
ARE  
MADE  
OF...



BUT THE GOOD THING ABOUT MY WINDOW  
VIEW IS THAT IT COULD BE SOLD TO FOREIGN  
REPORTERS FOR BIG MONEY!

...AND NOW, OUR  
BOYS ARE LEADING  
IN ATTACK!



# LETTERS.

SASHA,SASHA,SASHA,SASHA,

WHAT COMICS!! YOUR COMICS HAVE THIS DARK MYTHIC QUALITY, MOST MYTHS COME FROM DREAMS OR DREAM STATES VERY DARK, FROM YOUR SITUATION, I IMAGINE, BUT THEY HAVE THIS UPLIFTING ICONOGRAPHIC IMAGE MIXED IN. THEY WERE MUCH MORE THEN I EXPECTED SO SWEET

I CAN SYMPATHISE WITH THE COMMON PEOPLE BEING AT THE MERCY OF THEIR LEADERS WESTERN OR SERB/CROAT THE MEDIA TENDS TO PORTRAY THE CONFLICT OVER THERE AS A BUNCH OF SAVAGES GOING AT EACH OTHER WITH A GROUP OF VICTIMS IN THE MIDDLE, AND ALL IT NEEDS IS THE BIG BROTHER OF THE WEST TO STEP IN AND CLEAN IT UP IT IS ALL OVER SIMPLIFIED, AS USUAL THERE SEEMS TO BE DECADES OF REPRESSSED HOSTILITY AT WORK THERE, AS WELL AS THE USUAL POWER STRUGGLES PLAYED OUT BY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE AT THE TOP THE WESTERN LEADERS LIKE TO PRETEND THAT THEY ARE ABOVE SUCH BRUTALITY, BUT THEIR GAMES ARE JUST AS BRUTAL, THEY DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM THE ACTUAL NASTY BUSINESS...

TALKING ABOUT DREAM STATES, EVER SINCE I STARTED WORKING TOWARDS TH.S INDEPENDENT COMICS MAIL ORDER THING I HAVE HAD VERY STRANGE FEELINGS OF DEJA VU, BUT NOT THE USUAL FEELINGS OF MAYBE I HAVE DREAMT THIS BEFORE, BUT THAT THIS IS WHAT I AM MEANT TO DO, LIKE THERE IS A PARALEL LIFE OUT THERE AND WE ARE RUNNING IN CONJUNCTION, ALL THE MORE POWERFUL. I FELT I HAD SEEN YOUR WORK BEFORE, ESPECIALLY 'ALAS!' #1'S IMAGES. IT WOULD BE FUN IF WE ALL HAD A SHARED DREAM CONSCIOUSNESS, LIKE A COLLECTIVE CULTURAL UNCONCIOUS!!!

TIM DANCO  
FLEMINGTON, VICTORIA  
AUSTRALIA

I FIND YOUR ARTISTIC RELATION TO DREAMS VERY INTERESTING... I'VE HAD MANY 'LUCID' DREAMS IN MY LIFE THAT WERE VERY POWERFUL AND HAD DEEP MEANING FOR ME, AND THAT I REMEMBER AS IF THEY WERE IMPORTANT EVENTS THAT HAPPENED IN THE "REAL" WORLD.

JUST THE OTHER NIGHT, IN FACT, I WAS SUDDENLY BROUGHT OUT OF SLEEP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT BY A VOICE INSIDE MY HEAD TELLING ME, VERY EMPHATICALLY, THAT YES, THERE IS HIGHER INTELLIGENCE IN THE UNIVERSE, BEYOND EARTH.. WE ARE ALL PART OF IT.

.. MANY INTELLIGENT RACES OF BEINGS EXIST IN THE UNIVERSE... THERE IS A GREAT, POWERFUL FORCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS... SOME CALL IT GOD, BUT WE'RE ALL IN IT TOGETHER, ALL CONNECTED... ALL THIS WAS COMMUNICATED TO ME VERY QUICKLY, SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN A FEW SECONDS... I WAS OVERWHELMED, I STARTED BREATHING HEAVILY, IN A STATE OF EXCITEMENT... A KIND OF JOY, AND ALSO A KIND OF FEAR, AT THE SAME TIME .. IT WAS LIKE A REVELATION... THIS FORCE OF HIGHER INTELLIGENCE WAS TALKING DIRECTLY TO ME, OR SHOWING ITSELF TO ME.. WHICH MAKES ME REALIZE THAT TO BE READY TO REALLY ACCEPT SUCH A REVELATION REQUIRES A CERTAIN LEVEL OF MENTAL OR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT & DISCIPLINE THAT I DON'T HAVE... TOO BAD...

ROBERT CRUMB  
SAVIE  
FRANCE

DEAR SASA,

I'VE BEEN INTRIGUED BY YOUR WORK EVER SINCE I SAW THAT COVER OF YOURS YOU DID IN "TANTALIZING STORIES" #5. CAN YOU BUY ALL THESE AMERICAN COMICS IN YUGOSLAVIA, OR ARE THEY SENT TO YOU BY FRIENDS OVERSEAS?

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YOUR COMICS DID MAKE AN IMPACT ON A FEW OF US HERE. MAYBE WE SAW THE RELEVANCE BECAUSE SINGAPORE IS A MULTI-RACED COUNTRY AS WELL. EITHER WAY, IT PROVES THAT DRAWING COMICS DOES REACH OUT TO PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD.

LIM CHENG TJU  
SINGAPORE

SASA,

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR LETTER AND ITS KIND WORDS TOWARDS MY WORK. I AM OFTEN WONDERING IF I AM NOT WASTING MY TIME, BUT LETTERS LIKE YOURS CAN PUT THOSE SILLY FEARS ASIDE FOR A WHILE, AT LEAST. THANK YOU FOR THE ALAS! MINI COMIC. IT SEEMED SOMEHOW ANCIENT TO ME—AS IF IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN PRODUCED MANY MANY YEARS AGO—AS IF YOU WERE A YOUNG STUDENT OF GEORGE CRUIKSHANK AND IT WERE 1836—OR SOME SUCH SITUATION—WAR IS AN OLD COMPANION TO MAN, IS IT NOT?

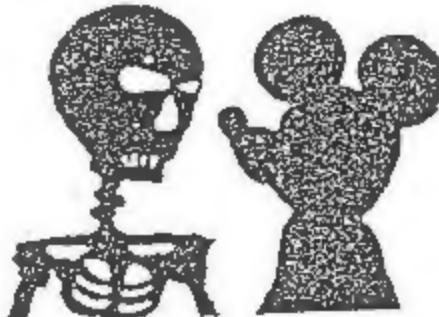
JEREMY EATON  
RENFREW, PA  
U.S.

—A LETTER FROM JEM EATON... WOW!

"LIFE UNDER SANCTIONS" IS MY FIRST SOLO COMIC BOOK. IT IS AVAILABLE FOR \$2.95 + 50¢ P&P, FROM: FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 LAKE CITY WAY N.E., SEATTLE, WA 98115 U. S. A.



"LIFE UNDER SANCTIONS" IS ALSO ON SALE AT BETTER COMIC SHOPS IN EUROPE (WESTERN EUROPE, OF COURSE!).



From a letter by Lee Kennedy

Dear Sasa -

2 May 94.

- I've been waiting for months to see 'Life Under Sanctions', but no sign of it in the shops. So, when I got your letter, I went to several

shops:



Finally...  
So, you're doing well in London

## MORE COMICS!

ALAS!COMICS #1 —— CREATED DURING THE SERBO-CROAT WAR IN 1991. "PSYCHOLOGICAL" VIEW OF EVERYDAY LIFE DURING THE WAR TIME. VERSION IN ITALIAN ALSO AVAILABLE (JUST STATE "EDIZIONE ITALIANA"). THE STRIP WAS TRANSLATED INTO SERBIAN, GALICIAN, FINNISH AND LITHUANIAN.  
US. 2 \$ (INCLUDING P&P)

ALAS!COMICS #2 —— "THE DREAM OF WAR ISSUE", CONSISTING OF FOUR SHORT PIECES —— "EACH OF THE STRIPS HAS A SORT OF ABSURD, HUMOROUS QUALITY" (THE COMICS JOURNAL).

US. 2 \$ (INCLUDING P & P)

ALL MINI COMICS LISTED  
ARE IN ENGLISH • FOR  
ALL ITEMS SEND  
CASH ONLY



SAŠA RAKEZIĆ  
c/o GORDANA BASTA  
MILOVANA GLIŠIĆA 11  
26 000 PANČEVO  
YUGOSLAVIA (SERBIA)

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